

TIBETAN DAILY LIFE ON THE GCAN TSHA THANG GRASSLAND

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ABSTRACT

Daily pastoral life in Rkang mo, Lo ba, Ka rgya dang bo, and Ka rgya gnyis pa pastoral communities located in Gcan tsha thang (Jianzhatan) Township, Gcan tsha (Jianzha) County, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province is described as it existed in 2013. Religion, winter housing, livestock and herding, winter, summer, the autumn camp, photographs of daily life, and four accounts are provided.

KEYWORDS

daily Tibetan life, Gcan tsha thang, Qinghai Province, Tibetan herding life, Tibetan pastoral life

After all, everyday life simply *is*, indisputably: the essential, taken-for-granted continuum of mundane activities that frames our forays into more esoteric or exotic worlds. It is the ultimate, non-negotiable reality, the unavoidable basis for all other forms of human endeavor (Felski 1999:15).

## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

What do most Tibetans do on an ordinary day in the herding area where I<sup>2</sup> was born and grew up? I never considered this question until I came to Xi'an City in Shaanxi Province to do a college degree in English. Before this, I had been surrounded by Tibetans on a daily basis, while attending Tibetan primary schools and then during my five years at Rwa rgya School (Gangs ljongs shes rig nor bu'i gling) in Mgo log Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province.

In 2012, I enrolled in Xi'an International Studies University and joined an English major class of twenty-five students, of whom twenty were female and five were male. There were two Uygur students from the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and three Tibetan students (all young men, including me). The other students were all Han.

I was often asked about my community, for example: "What do people often eat in your home place?" "What sort of clothes do you wear at home?" "What kind and how many livestock does your family have?" "Can you ride a horse?" "How did you go to school when you were a child?"

Sometimes I joked in my broken Chinese that I rode a wild yak or a gentle wolf to school.

The students stared at me in amazement when I talked to them in my broken Chinese. While answering their questions and registering their surprise, I realized how different my family's daily life was from the daily life of my classmates - many of whom became my friends. I also realized how few people in China and, in fact, the world lived as

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<sup>1</sup> We thank Gabriela Samcewicz, Timothy Thurston, and Snying lcags rgyal for reading and commenting on earlier versions of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> All first person references signify Sangs rgyas bkra shis.

my family lives. I then decided to write about the daily life I was familiar with.

I am writing about daily life in Rkang mo, Lo ba, Ka rgya dang bo, and Ka rgya gnyis pa pastoral communities based on my experiences and those of my family. There are many things I am not writing about, for example, the daily life of monks and nuns, activities on special days such as during Lo sar 'Tibetan New Year', weddings, funerals, and so on.

Daily life is changing rapidly, as I detail at the end of this paper. My father, for example, bought a small, new pick-up truck in 2013, as higher sale prices for our livestock brought us more cash income. This truck and other relatively recent changes such as mobile phones, and more disposable income, explain many on-going changes in daily life.

What ordinary people do every day is important because it defines our fundamental performance as humans and constitutes the largest portion of our lived existence. Nevertheless, mundane lives are often dismissed and undocumented as evidenced by how the field of Tibetan history and contemporary Tibetan Studies often ignore this.<sup>1</sup>

Tibetan people's daily life is at a critical moment in history as it shifts in multiple directions, under various outside pressures. Meanwhile, older generations are passing away, often leaving grandchildren who know little of their grandparents' personal/community histories.

My interest in elders (born in the 1930s) led me to listen closely as they chatted to one another and later, to ask questions, but it is very challenging to find detailed, accurate records before the 1930s related to my community. This lack of information is a great loss. Appreciating the magnitude of this loss motivates me to write in some detail about the daily life I experienced as a child in order to create an accurate record for my children and grandchildren so that they will have a better understanding of their/our culture and people.<sup>2</sup> This effort at

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<sup>1</sup> There are noteworthy exceptions, e.g., see Orgyan Nyima (2016), Gangs phrug (2015), and Naktsang Nulo (2014); and several autoethnographies published by *Asian Highlands Perspectives* (e.g., Tshe beu lha mo 2013).

<sup>2</sup> To this end, I have also described my experiences with songs and singing in my home community (Sangs rgyas bkra shis et al. 2015).

documenting daily life in this particular herding area may also interest others outside my home community who are interested in the lives of ordinary, herding Tibetans.

## FAMILY AND LOCATION

My family (FIG 6) consists of six people: my father (Rin chen rgyal, b. 1963), mother (Klu mo tshe ring, b. 1963), eldest brother (Dge 'dun shes rab, b. 1984), elder brother (Ban de rgyal, b. 1986), sister-in-law (Gser mtsho skyid, b. 1988), and me (Sangs rgyas bkra shis, b. 1991). My paternal grandmother (Pa lo skyid, b. 1940) lives next door in the home of Father's youngest brother (Skal bzang rdo rje, b. 1988). His family members consist of his wife (Rdo rje skyid, b. 1988), and two sons (Gcod pa don 'grub, b. 2006; Dpal ldan bkra shis, b. 2007) and one daughter (G.yang 'dzoms lha mo, b. 2009). Grandmother frequently goes back and forth between our two homes.

Gcan tsha thang (Jianzhatan) Township is located in Gcan tsha (Jianzha) County, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province. The township consists of seven pastoral communities: G.yon ru (Xiayangzhi), Sprel nag (Shinaihai), Gle gzhug (Laiyu), Rkang mo (Gangmao), Lo ba (Luowa), Ka rgya dang bo (Gajiyi), and Ka rgya gnyis pa (Gajiaer).<sup>1</sup> Gcan tsha thang Township, at an average elevation of 3,500 meters above sea level, has a land area of 642 square kilometers and a population of 4,000, of whom ninety-nine percent, according to official statistics, is Tibetan.<sup>2</sup>

Agriculture is practiced only in Gle gzhug where locals cultivate barley, wheat, and canola. Nearly all families raise yaks (FIG 5), sheep (FIG 36, 37), horses, and a few goats.

The township offices are located in the township seat/capital, which is called Gcan tsha thang (Jianzhatan). In 2014, this small settlement consisted of one main road along which there were several

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<sup>1</sup> Data for elevation, population, and pastoral communities are from <http://bit.ly/2H3S4rF> (accessed 3 March 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Teachers, township government workers, and others constitute the remaining one percent. For more on this community, see Sangs rgyas bkra shis with Stuart (2014).

small shops that sold clothes, snacks, and candy; several township government offices; and a Hope primary school<sup>1</sup> that had three grades<sup>2</sup> with a total of some 200 students ranging from eight to thirteen years old, who were mostly from G.yon ru Pastoral Community, and ten teachers. Another Hope primary school located about fifteen minutes by motorcycle from the township seat had four grades,<sup>3</sup> and in 2014, it had about 300 students and thirteen teachers. This school is mostly attended by children from Rkang mo, Lo ba, Ka rgya dang bo, and Ka rgya gnyis pa pastoral communities. When students finish Grade Three in the former school and Grade Four in the latter school, those continuing their education attend primary school<sup>4</sup> in the county town, Mar khu thang.<sup>5</sup>

Other pastoral communities have their own elementary schools. I am from Lo ba Pastoral Community, which has about 115 households, fifty of which belong to the Lho ba Tsho ba 'tribe'. The remaining sixty-five belong to the Lo ba Tribe. Every household has a fixed house where they live in winter. Tribal exogamy is practiced, i.e., members of Lho ba and Lo ba tribes intermarry. I belong to the Lho ba Tribe.

## RELIGION

When asked to name their religion, local residents reply, "Sangs rgyas chos lugs" 'Buddhism'. The Dge lugs monastery, Dga' ldan bshad sgrub dar rgyas gling, located in Ka rgya Pastoral Community, is the most

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<sup>1</sup> The non-governmental Project Hope, sponsored by the Communist Youth League Central Committee and the China Youth Development Foundation, provides support to schools in rural areas of China (<http://on.china.cn/2DpkOxF>, accessed 19 January 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Grades One, Two, and Three. There was no kindergarten/ pre-school class.

<sup>3</sup> Grades One, Two, Three, and Four. There was no kindergarten/ pre-school class.

<sup>4</sup> Despite the existence of a national compulsory education law, about 80 percent of children born around 1991 (the year of my birth) did not complete nine years of school. About thirty percent never attended school at all, e.g., my older brother. To my knowledge, no local families were punished for not ensuring their children were in school.

<sup>5</sup> Gcan tsha rdzong 'Gcan tsha County' is a term for Mar khu thang that is now widely used among younger, educated people. However, Grandmother and other elders generally say Mar khu thang.

important religious center for locals. From my home, this monastery is about a thirty-minute walk or fifteen-minute motorcycle ride. This monastery was founded in 1897 by Dpal ldan, a monk from Rkang mo Village. At that time, the monastery was situated in Rkang mo Village and called Sgar chag. Later, a Tibetan scholar, Zhwa dmar paṇḍita Dge 'dun bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho, moved the monastery to its current location. The monastery was then offered to the fifth reincarnation *bla ma*, Ngang rong lnga ba 'jam dbyangs mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, who became *dgon bdag* 'master of the monastery'.<sup>1</sup> In 2013, the monastery had about thirty-six monks, who visited homes when invited to perform such religious activities as funerals, healing rituals, and chanting sessions.

On the fifteenth day of the fourth lunar month, a representative from each family living in the four pastoral communities Ka rgya dang bo, Ka rgya gnyis pa, Rkang mo, and Lo ba would go to Dga' ldan bshad sgrub dar rgyas gling to fast. This is called the Bzhi ba'i smyung gnas (Fourth Month Fast),<sup>2</sup> and is the most widely attended ritual held at this monastery. The fast lasts two days. Attendance at other rituals, e.g., Smon lam, conducted at the monastery is much lower, with locals preferring to go to larger monasteries such as Bde chen dgon pa,<sup>3</sup> also located in Gcan tsha County.

For the Fourth Month Fast in 2001 when I was thirteen years old, everyone gathered in the monastery chanting room and chanted. On the first day, we brought *rtsam pa*,<sup>4</sup> *mar* 'butter', and *chur ba* 'dry cheese' for ourselves from home. We had milk tea in the morning and

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<sup>1</sup> Information on this monaster is from Mkhyen rab rgya mtsho (b. 1966), a monk from Gshong mo che Monastery. Dga' ldan bshad sgrub dar rgyas gling Monastery is a branch of Gshong mo che Monastery.

<sup>2</sup> The fifteenth day marks the Buddha's enlightenment and Mahāparinirvāṇa. While many locals may be unfamiliar with the particular nature of this date, they believe that it is an important religious time.

<sup>3</sup> Bde chen dgon pa is about forty-five minutes from my home by car or motorcycle.

<sup>4</sup> *Rtsam pa* refers to roasted barley flour. It also refers to a staple food that is made by pouring hot tea in a bowl and then adding butter, dry cheese, roasted barely and, according to personal preference, sugar. Four fingers are used to mix these ingredients to form a ball which is then eaten. My family uses a hand mill (FIG 55 ) in our home to grind roasted barley grain into *rtsam pa*.

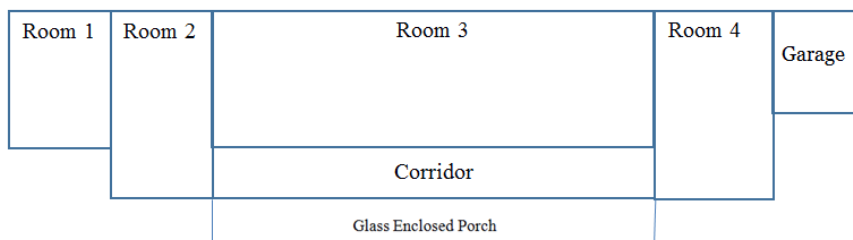
*rtsam pa* and milk tea for lunch. We tried to have a lot because we would not eat for the rest of the day, nor the next. That afternoon, we drank milk called *rung ja*. The next day we were not allowed to chat nor eat. We chanted the whole day. On the final morning we had flour cooked in milk - *thor thug*.

## WINTER HOUSE

The first month of the lunar calendar is the beginning of spring, summer technically begins with the fourth month, fall with the seventh, and winter with the 10<sup>th</sup>. Because actual forage periods differ at different altitudes, we spend varying amounts of time at the different pastures.

My family lives in a house constructed from a combination of adobe and wood and also in tents in summer pastures in the mountains (FIGS 3, 4) and on a separate grassland in late summer and autumn (FIGS 17, 18). Our one-story winter home is located at the foot of a mountain on a large grassland (FIGS 1, 3). It has four rooms, none of which have a specific name. For the sake of convenience, I refer to them as rooms One, Two, Three, and Four (see SKETCH 1).

SKETCH 1. My Family's house (not to scale).



Father lived all year round in a black yak hair tent until 1972, when he was about nine years old. At that time, my paternal grandparents constructed a simple one-room house. They then lived in this house in winter and in tents for other parts of the year while herding livestock. Later, my grandparents moved near where our present house is, and built another simple one-room house, after which they moved to our present home location and built another

house.

In about 2005, Father again decided that we should have a new house. He paid and supervised about six Tibetans from farming areas in Gcan tsha County to make the packed earth walls of the house. Wall-building required about one week. Father then paid a Chinese family that lived near Khri ka County Town for a yard of trees. The trees were cut down, and the logs were transported to our home. The house was built by four Tibetan carpenters - three brothers and their brother-in-law - from Bde chen Village, Gcan tsha County. They worked for about two months to build our house.

The flat roof of the home was made of wood, over which was layered lightly packed *sa dkar* 'white soil'/'loess'), a piece of plastic, and finally another layer of *sa dkar*. After the house construction was finished, my family plastered the inside walls with a thin coat of mud which, after it dried, they whitewashed. We also made *hu tse*<sup>1</sup> and cooking stoves in rooms One and Three.

Rooms Three and Four were paneled with wood. Floors of red bricks were laid in all rooms by a Chinese man from Khri ka County. In about 2010, we added a glass-enclosed porch (FIG 52) in front of our home.

Brother and Sister-in-law sleep in Room One where there is a *hu tse* (FIG 51) warmed by a stove. This room is where we cook. Cooking creates smoke that blackens furniture, walls, and the ceiling. Confining cooking to this room keeps the largest room where guests are entertained cleaner. Flour, cooking utensils, cups, bowls, plates, cooking oil, water buckets, potatoes, onions, cabbage, and flour are kept here.

There is a large bed (with a wooden frame) in Room Four, along with an 'o zo 'churn' (FIG 43), sheepskins, flour stored in bags (FIG 28),

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<sup>1</sup> Blo brtan rdo rje and Stuart (2008:26) give the explanation below for the *hu tse*, which they spell *hezee*. We use the spelling "*hu tse*" because this closely approximates what is said locally.

"*Hezee*" is a Tibetan word that lacks an accurate standard written form. Today, it is also increasingly in literary Tibetan as "*tsha thab*" that translates as "hot stove." This is incorrect because the *hezee* is not a hot stove, rather, it is a hollow platform made of stones with a thin layer of dry, hard earth on top, which is where family members sleep and important guests eat.



ropes, tents, *rtsam pa*, *chur ba*, butter, and robes and other clothing. There is also a small metal stove in this room, but we rarely use it. If someone sleeps here in winter, an electric blanket provides warmth. A small garage is attached to Room Four.

In Room Three (FIG 49), the largest room, there is a *hu tse*; a cooking area (FIG 45) that includes a stove connected to the *hu tse*, several stools, a brick floor on which several carpets are laid out for guests who prefer to sit on the floor (e.g., older people), and a television across from the *hu tse*. Tea (historically kept in *ka mo* 'small woven bags', FIG 20) is routinely boiled on the stove in this room. Cooking, however, is done here generally only when we have many guests, for example, during Lo sar. The *hu tse* runs the length of one wall, and is big enough to sleep five or six people. Room Three also has a freezer, refrigerator, washing machine, television, DVD player, two wall cabinets, and two free-standing cabinets. Felt mats and carpets are stored in the wall cabinets. Dishes, candy, metal buckets, large metal plates, tea bowls, butter, glasses, and chopsticks are stored in the free-standing cabinets (FIG 48). Under the red, free-standing cabinet is a metal box with dung and a wooden box that holds *rtsam pa*, butter, and dried cheese.

At one end of the *hu tse* is the *chos sgam* (scripture cabinet, FIG 50). This is a wooden, glass-enclosed cabinet holding several *thang ka*, several volumes of scriptures (e.g., *Ting 'phags bskal gsum*, *Gser 'od*, and *Gzungs bsdus*), an electric-powered prayer wheel, a mandala, and images of various religious personages (FIG 7). There are pictures of the Karmapa (O rgyan 'phrin las rdo rje, b. 1985), the tenth Paṇ chen rin po che (1938-1989), Jo bo rin po che,<sup>1</sup> and Rje rin po che (Tsong kha pa 1357-1419). The outside of the cabinet is framed by a string of colored electric lights that are turned on day and night for the first three days of Lo sar. The lights are also turned on for a couple of hours on the nights of the first, third, fifth, eighth, and fifteenth days of each lunar month. In addition, a *mchod me* (butter lamp) is placed on the *mchod khri* and lit each night. The latter refers, in this case, to a table in front of the scripture cabinet on which are placed twenty-eight *dung phor* 'water bowls' (described below).

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<sup>1</sup> A Śākyamuni image in the Jo khang in Lha sa.

In the house, different types of fuel are used. Yak dung catches fire easily, burns quickly, and gives off much heat, which facilitates cooking. *Lci ba* refers to wet yak dung and *ong ba* refers to dried yak dung. In contrast, *ril ma* 'sheep/goat dung' does not catch fire as easily and therefore, yak dung is generally burned first to ignite it. Also, because sheep/goat dung burns more slowly, it is added to the fire at night in order to have embers the next morning. Sheep/goat dung is put in the back of a *thab ka* 'stove' and yak dung is put in the front. In addition, yak dung pieces are put into the *thab khung* 'stove hole'<sup>1</sup> and added when necessary. Ash and embers are removed from a *go khung* 'bottom opening' in the stove under the metal shelf.

The *go dung* is a rectangular area (fifty-five by forty-five centimeters) that contains ash in front of the stove. Family members sit around the *go dung* during meals when there are no formal visitors. The general area for sitting and eating is the *go kha* (FIG 46), a rectangular space in front of the stove where embers are scraped out of the fire from the stove to provide warmth.

Room Two is used mostly as the place for entertaining guests, particularly Han guests who prefer to sit in armchairs rather than on the *hu tse* or on a floor carpet. There is a metal stove where dung may be burned. However, if heating is necessary when guests visit, we now more often use an electric heater. In 2014, this room contained four large armchairs, three wooden stools, and a television that receives signals from our satellite dish. One wall is lined with stacked wooden boxes that contain clothes; cloth; quilts; pillows; and women's coral, turquoise, and silver adornments. The wall at the back of the room features a glass-faced cabinet that holds *thang ka*, some of my school awards, and plastic flowers. The lower parts of the walls of this room are covered with ceramic tiles bought from Khri ka County Town.

Our glass enclosed porch is about four meters wide and nine meters long. It runs in front of rooms Two, Three, and Four. Here we dry our family's clothes after washing, and chives.<sup>2</sup> Once dried, the

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<sup>1</sup> *Thab khung* literally translates as 'stove hole', but more precisely, it refers to the upper part of the top opening in the front of the stove)

<sup>2</sup> We buy chives from Khri ka County Town and from Chinese businessmen from Khri ka County who come to our community with a truck and sell flour, chives, potatoes, barley grain, wheat grain, and bricks. These men speak

chives are put in plastic bags and stored here, for later use as livestock feed.

The final space in the home to mention is the corridor that runs in front of Room Three. The outside wall is the glass wall that is shared with the glass-enclosed porch. The corridor is a space for bags of flour, rice, and barley, a motorcycle, and two cabinets for storing pots and other items.

#### LIVESTOCK AND HERDING

In 2013, my family made three seasonal movements with our livestock. In the fifth lunar month, Father, Elder Brother, and Sister-in-law took our livestock (thirty yaks and 300 sheep) to the mountains. Typically, we would leave at about eight AM, reach the mountain campsite at about five PM, and then pitch our tents. I was attending university at that time and unable to accompany them.

Mother and Grandmother stayed at our winter home, where they guarded the house and property and cared for the two sons of Father's youngest brother. They kept five goats of which they milked three. The goat milk is used only to make milk tea.

After about forty-five days, Elder Brother and Sister-in-law packed the tent and other belongings, gathered the livestock, and left the mountain in the morning at around eight. They reached Ston sa (autumn place; FIGS 15, 16, 17, 18,) at about six PM. Here, our family shares a fenced pasture (FIGS 19, 38) with two other families. This location is about one hour on foot from our winter house. After about two months of herding the yaks and sheep in Ston sa, they moved back to our winter house.

We live in tents on the mountain and also in Ston sa. Until about 2005, we lived in black yak hair tents. Afterwards, we used a *ras gur* 'cloth tent'. *Sga* 'pack frames' are put on the yaks the night before moving. Everything that is to be transported is made ready. The items

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good Tibetan and know local people who can contact them by phone and ask for delivery of certain goods.

to be transported are loaded on the yaks the next morning and then the livestock and herders begin the move.

In terms of our annual movements (TABLE 1), we live in Dgun sa 'winter place' for about seven months, on the mountain for one and a half months, and in Sgon sa for about four months. The exact times vary from year to year depending on weather and pasture conditions.

TABLE 1. Annual Schedule

Lunar Month	Activity	People	Location
1 <sup>st</sup>	caring for livestock	all	Dgun sa
2 <sup>nd</sup>	caring for livestock	all	Dgun sa
3 <sup>rd</sup>	caring for livestock	all	Dgun sa
4 <sup>th</sup>	caring for livestock	all	Dgun sa
5 <sup>th</sup>	go to the Gser chen Mountains to herd; Mother and Grandmother stay at Dgun sa	Sister-in-law, Father, Brother, Mother (for 1 or 2 days)	Gser chen Mountains
5 <sup>th</sup>	care for the home, milk three goats, cut grass, soften lambskins (FIG 39), watch the fences and fenced pasture to prevent trespassing livestock from O'u rong Village	Grandmother and Mother	Dgun sa, Ston sa
15 <sup>th</sup> day, 6 <sup>th</sup> lunar month	pack, move to Ston sa	Sister-in-law, Father, Brother, Sister-in-law, Mother (who comes and goes)	Ston sa
15 <sup>th</sup> day, 8 <sup>th</sup> lunar month	herd sheep to Dgun sa	Father and Mother	Dgun sa
16 <sup>th</sup> day, 10 <sup>th</sup> lunar month	herd livestock	Brother and Sister-in-law (yaks); Mother and Father (sheep)	Ston sa (yaks) Dgun sa (sheep)
11 <sup>th</sup>	caring for livestock	all	Dgun sa
12 <sup>th</sup>	caring for livestock	all	Dgun sa

I will now give three accounts illustrating my experiences on the mountains, in the autumn camp, and at our winter home.

#### ACCOUNT ONE

I went to the mountain with Uncle Dkon mchog rgyal the first time when I was eleven. I was in school and my family had already moved to the mountains when my summer holiday came. Uncle Dkon mchog rgyal came to buy some supplies near the school where there were some small shops. Father had told him to pick me up.

It was afternoon when we reached the foot of the mountains, which were covered with dark, thick fog. It was lightly raining. I could only see about ten meters in front of me. My family's camp was in a deep valley. The mountains are very steep and I could hardly keep up with Uncle Dkon mchog rgyal who said, "Young people who lack experience here easily get lost. Sometimes even those who have often been here lose their way in the fog."

People shouted when they got lost, hoping to meet someone who would show them the right direction. There were piles of stones on the way that Uncle Dkon mchog rgyal said local people had made to show the directions when someone got lost.

Grandmother once told me that Father's third brother, Rdo rje thar, and fourth brother, Bkra shis rgya mtsho, got lost when they were returning from Ko'u ba Monastery. They came to a place where white rocks were strewn about. We call those stones *ko ro*. It is very easy to slide on those rocks when it rains. Bkra shis rgya mtsho lost his footing and hurt his foot so badly that he could not walk. Rdo rje thar carried him on his back. When it got dark they heard wolves howling. It was very cold and Bkra shis rgya mtsho almost died there. They finally found a home and spent the night there.

There is a spring of very clean water near our tent. We can hear the sound of the spring water trickling down the mountain. Mother and Father were delighted by my arrival. Mother gave me some sparrows and spoons that she had carved out of wood. Brother told me that he would take me to collect wild strawberries on a sunny day. All this excited me.

The next morning, there was no fog and not a single cloud in the sky. The sun shone unobstructed throughout the valley. Chirping birds flew

about. The right side of the valley was covered with various trees and the left side was decorated with many beautiful flowers. The livestock wandered freely and herdsmen gathered at the top of the valley and enjoyed the beautiful views of the landscape.

Because my neighbor did not have children who could herd calves, I and other children herded my family's calves and our neighbor's calves. My neighbor gave me candy and cooked delicious food to reward me when I returned from herding. We often herded the calves into the trees and then washed our feet in a stream where we swam and splashed each other. Sometimes we competed to see who could collect the driest wood and carry it home. Parents praised us for helping bring back fuel.

One morning when fog covered the earth, I herded my calves to a hollow where there was wonderful, fresh grass and then I returned to our tent. I checked my calves at noon and found they were all gone. I searched everywhere, but I could not find them. The fog became thicker and thicker. Giving up on finding the calves, I decided to return home. It would soon be dark. Suddenly, I lost my sense of direction. I went from valley to valley searching for my family's camp. I shouted, hoping to meet someone. I was nervous and my heart was pounding.

We called a place with dense trees *spyang tshang* 'den of wolves'. We could hear the many wolves there howling when darkness fell. I thought I might be near that place and my legs quavered. Luckily, I met an older man who told me I was going in a completely wrong direction. He guided me for about one kilometer, pointed out the correct direction, and said that I should go straight ahead. I thanked him and returned home. My parents were calling my name loudly when I got near our tent. They knew I was lost and were afraid that I would not find the way back. Brother said the calves had found their mothers who were nursing them when he went to collect the mother yaks.

## ACCOUNT TWO

Wolves are a very real concern. Every night on the mountains, men went out and shouted to prevent wolves from attacking our livestock. We camped with about seven other families. Our camps are very near each other. The other families are our *ru skor* 'neighbors'. All of the group's sheep are put together in the center of the camps.

One night in about 2004, the dogs barked loudly and madly lunged against their chains. The chains were clanking, the calves were bawling, and then someone shouted, "Everybody get up! Wolves are attacking our sheep!"

Father and Brother got up immediately and ran into the dark with their flashlights. I tried to go with them but Mother held me back, scolding, "You are too young to go with them."

All the adult men shouted and went after the wolves. Only half of the sheep were left. About one hour later, Father and Brother came back with the others and reported:

The wolves drove off half of the sheep. Some sheep were attacked and collapsed on the way. There are about three or four wolves and we cannot get the sheep back if we do not have six men. It's dark and we do not know how many sheep are missing.

The next morning, injured and dead sheep were all around the camp. The injured sheep had been bitten on the neck and belly. Two dead sheep did not have heads. We threw away the dead sheep and vultures and crows swooped in for a meal. Father and Brother separated our sheep from the others and counted them. Though ours are not marked to indicate ownership, Brother and Father know them well and can easily recognize them. Two of my family's sheep had been injured and one was dead. One sheep's stomach had been ripped open. Father sewed it with a needle and a white string, and then wrapped it with cloth. The other sheep had a neck injury. A large piece of skin was missing. Father could not sew it so he wrapped it in cloth. In total, ten sheep were injured and five were dead.

Grandmother said:

Wolves try to bite as many sheep as they can, and then try to take one with them at the last moment. They like to take sheep's heads and udders with them and teach their cubs how to attack sheep.



## ACCOUNT THREE

We were living in a tent on the autumn grassland when I was about ten. Father went somewhere leaving Mother, Brother, and me at home. One night when I was sleeping, a bug crawled into my ear. I woke up because it was very uncomfortable. I could feel the bug moving in my ear. It was terribly painful. I woke Mother who said, "Don't be afraid and nervous. If you feel nervous and cry, the bug will go deeper into your head." She quickly built up the fire, heated a bit of butter, and poured it into my ear. My ear felt thick and dense but the bug stopped moving. My ear felt uncomfortable for some days. Later, my ear returned to normal and the bug dried and broken bits of the bug fell out of my ear. Grandmother often tells children:

Don't sleep on the grassland while you are herding. Let me tell you why: One day, a woman was sleeping on the mountain while she was herding sheep. A snake crawled into her mouth. She was terrified and tried to pull the snake out with her hands. This frightened the snake, which moved deeper into her body. She ran to her home and her family took her to a hospital, but she was already dead when they arrived. A doctor examined her and said that the snake had bitten a big vein of her heart.

## WINTER

## Morning

In the morning of a typical winter day, Mother gets up first at about six AM, folds her quilt, and puts on her robe. She shovels the ash from the adobe stove with a *me lcags* 'ember shovel' into a metal bucket that she carries outside and empties onto an ash pile (FIG 31) that sits in a gutter near the front of our house.

Coming back inside, she puts soft dry yak dung atop embers in the adobe stove. The morning wind blows on the embers and the dung catches fire. Room Three begins to warm. Mother pours water from a

thermos into a basin, adds some cold water, washes her face, and brushes her teeth.

She then puts a long mat on the floor and begins prostrating and chanting *Skyabs 'gro*, *Sgrol ma*, *Ltung bshags*, *Bar chad lam sel*, *Bzang spyod smon lam*, and so on. Though Mother never attended school, she taught herself to read and has memorized texts that she often repeats. After one one hundred prostrations, she goes to Room One, wakes Sister-in-law, and locates their blue plastic water pails. As Mother walks around, the sound of her chanting pervades the house. It is often cold in the morning, and pausing her chanting, Mother urges Sister-in-law to put on a *rtsag pa* (full length, sheep-skin robe).

When dawn breaks, Mother and Sister-in-law each carry their own pail on their backs and go to fetch water (FIG 10). All the while Father and Brother are each still on their warm *hu tse*, wrapped in a quilt.

Rdo rje skyid is the wife of Father's youngest brother. We are neighbors. "Rdo rje skyid! Come fetch water!" calls Mother. Rdo rje skyid quickly emerges with her bucket. If it is still dark, they use flashlights to guide them.

About fifteen minutes later they reach their destination, a small stream. The water is frozen. Using large stones, they break a hole in the ice, and fill their buckets using plastic ladles. The water does not flow quickly into the hole. With three people scooping water, they must wait several seconds for the hole to fill again.

Other neighboring women come. It is difficult for one woman to put a bucket of water on her own back so they help each other. If a woman is alone, she must find a boulder or something higher on which to perch the bucket, and then slowly pull the bucket onto her back, using both hands.

On the way back, the women laugh and talk about the weather, livestock, clothes, and village news. This is also a good chance for them to chat without men overhearing what they say.

When Brother gets up, the sun is already shining through the window. He washes his face, brushes his teeth, and puts dung in the stove before Mother and Sister-in-law return. He helps them put their buckets on the floor in rooms One and Three.

Mother then puts fresh water into twenty-one<sup>1</sup> copper *dung phor* on the table in front of the sacred images.

Brother puts some embers into a metal bucket and covers them with dung. He pours some milk and water into a ladle, puts the *bsang khug* 'incense bag' (FIGS 24) into his robe pouch and holding both the bucket and ladle, walks to a hill behind our house where the *bsang khri* 'incense altar' (FIG 14) is located, near a *dar lcog* 'prayer flags on a pole' (FIG 58).

At the *bsang khri* he puts his hat on the ground, then moving the ash to the altar puts the embers on the incense altar. The embers blaze immediately in the wind. He raises the incense bag and removing a *bsang khem* 'big spoon', puts three spoons of incense on the altar. He then pours on it water mixed with milk, flings the remainder of the milk-water mixture into the sky, and circumambulates the altar three times while entreating deities to bless people and livestock. The following approximates what he says:

ཡེ། མཚན་མོ་ཨུ་ཏུ་རྩྱ། མཚན་མོ་ཨུ་ཏུ་རྩྱ། མཚན་མོ་ཨུ་ཏུ་རྩྱ།  
 མཚན་བླ་མ་ཡི་དམ་སངས་རྒྱལ་བྱང་མཆོག་དཔལ་འཛོམས་འགྲོ་ཆོས་སྐྱོད་སྤྱང་མ་ཡུལ་ལྷ་གཞི་བདག་མགོ་ནག་གི་  
 སྐྱབས་རེ་ས། གཙམ་ས་པ་མ་འདྲ་བོ། ང་གང་སྐང་ས་ནས་ཁ་ལ་ས་དགོ་དགོས། གང་འོང་ས་ནས་བསམ་དོན་འགྲུབ་  
 དགོས། མི་ལ་ནང་ཆ་འོང་མི་ཉན། ལྷ་གས་ལ་གོང་ཁ་འོང་མི་ཉན། བཙན་གྱི་རྩི་མོ་དགུང་ལ་མཉམ་དགོས། ལྷ་གས་གྱི་  
 རུ་མ་ཐང་ལ་བརྒྱུད་དགོས། ངས་བྱུང་གང་སྐང་ས་ནས་མཚན་གྱི་ན་ཡོང། ང་ལ་མགོན་སྐྱབས་རེ་གཙོང་ས།

*Ye/ mChod Om ā hum/ mChod Om ā hum/ mChod Om ā hum*  
*mChod bla ma yi dam sangs rgyas byang sems dpa' bo mkha' 'gro*  
*chos skyong srung ma yul lha gzhi bdag/ mgo nag gi skyabs re sa/*  
*gnam sa pha ma 'dra bo/ nga gar song sa nas kha las dge dgos/ gar*  
*'ong sa nas bsam don 'grub dgos/ mi la nad tsha 'ong mi nyan/*  
*phyugs la god kha 'ong mi nyan/ btsan gyi rtse mo dgung la mnyam*  
*dgos/ phyugs kyi ru ma thang la brdal dgos/ ngas khyod gar song sa*  
*nas mchod kyin yod/ nga la mgon skyabs re gnongs/*

<sup>1</sup> Three, seven, and twenty-one are believed to be auspicious numbers. This explains the number "twenty-one", i.e., three times seven. For example, circumambulation is often done seven times.

Men call the names of buddhas, *bla ma*, and mountain deities loudly when they offer *bsang*. Women also call the same names, but not loudly. In addition, women do not go to mountain *lab rtse* (FIGS 11, 59), although more recently, female students do so, for example, before an important examination.

Father gets up last. He folds his quilt and tidies all the pillows and quilts. He sweeps the felt mats made from sheep hair on the *hu tse* with a plastic broom. Sister-in-law pours warm water into the basin for Father, who washes his face, brushes his teeth, and then goes to the sheep-shed (FIG 37) to see if any ewes have given birth.

Mother sweeps the floor (FIG 57) and corridor in our home and brings yak dung and sheep and goat pellets from outside. The milk tea is boiling by this time, sending out a plume of steam. Sister-in-law puts *rtsam pa*, dried cheese, and butter into everyone's bowl. We are then ready for breakfast. We sit round the *go kha*. Father sits on the right side of the *go kha*<sup>1</sup> closest to the stove, followed by Brother and then me. Mother and Sister-in-law sit on the left side. Sister-in-law pours milk tea into Father's bowl and offers it with both hands. She then offers tea to Brother, me, and then Mother. Younger people use both hands when they receive or offer something to older people to show respect. Meanwhile, my family's three cats approach and we feed them with food that we are eating. Conversation during the meal might include, for example, livestock; chanting; and village news such as illnesses, births, deaths, engagements, the weather, and so on. Father gives instructions about what we should do that day. We also watch TV, for example, programs featuring singing and dancing; and programs in Tibetan such as *Journey to the West*.<sup>2</sup>

At about eight-thirty, Mother takes her *bzho ze'u* (wooden milk bucket, FIG 54) and goes to milk eight female yaks. Sister-in-law carries a *sle bo* (wooden basket) (FIG 30) on her back to the yak shed where she picks up yak dung, puts it into the basket, and carries it to

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<sup>1</sup> Right, when facing the *go kha*.

<sup>2</sup> *Journey to the West* is a TV series adapted from the classic Chinese novel of the same name. First broadcast in 1986 (in Chinese) it was later dubbed in Tibetan and was extremely popular with Tibetan audiences. This program is referred to locally as Tang San Bla ma and also as Sun Wukong, after characters in the series.

the yak dung pile (FIGS 8, 32) on a small hill in front of our house. Using a stick she spreads out the wet dung so it will dry more quickly. She collects dry dung and puts it atop the pile and daubs the pile with wet dung, so it will be less likely to collapse and also appear more neat and tidy.

In winter, we divide our sheep into three flocks: ewes and their lambs, two-year-old sheep (both male and female), and ewes that did not give birth and other male sheep. Ewes that recently gave birth cannot walk quickly, lag behind the other sheep, and need a warm place to stay.

We also use a fenced pasture that we share with seven other families. How many sheep a family can put in this fenced pasture depends on how much land it owns inside the fence. We herd our two-year-old sheep and yaks in our own, separately fenced pasture on the mountain.

Father and Brother go to the sheep-shed and feed chaff mixed with dried grass to the very thin sheep and ewes that recently gave birth. We keep ewes that ignore their lambs in the sheep-shed the whole day. Mother feeds them and holds them so that their lambs can nurse.

The eight families that share the fenced pasture have to limit their time in this pasture. They must herd the livestock to the fenced area (FIG 12) at ten-thirty AM and lead them out by five PM, otherwise the grass will not be able to re-grow. There is nowhere else to herd the livestock. Heavy snow spells disaster on highland pastures in winter. Mother and Grandmother told me about a very bad winter when, after a month of heavy snow, half of the family's livestock of 800 sheep, 110 yaks, and twenty-five calves died.

At around ten-thirty, Father wraps his face and neck in a thick scarf and herds the ewes into the shared, fenced pasture (FIG 36). He cannot herd two sheep flocks at the same time because the path is too narrow so Brother herds the second flock into the fenced pasture after Father. After returning home, Brother leads the third flock to the fenced pasture on the mountain that belongs to my family. One or two hours later, he again returns home.

In the meantime, Mother finishes milking, puts the milk bucket in Room Four, herds the yaks into the fenced pasture on the mountain

half a kilometer from our home, and returns home. She prepares food for our two dogs that are fed three times a day. She puts flour and bread in a metal bucket, adds water, heats it, and pours it into two basins - one for each dog. Lambs and thin sheep that die are skinned, chopped up, and also fed to the dogs.

Sister-in-law fetches water again. We need a lot of water for the sheep that are kept at home. The other sheep are watered once every two or three days at water sources near or within their respective pastures.

Next, Mother and Sister-in-law go into the sheep-shed with two loose wool bags. With brooms they sweep the dung into small piles, collecting it in the bags (FIG 25) that they empty onto a pile of sheep dung.<sup>1</sup> This takes about one and a half hours.

## Afternoon

After cleaning the sheep-shed, Mother and Sister-in-law prepare lunch, which is often potatoes fried with meat, bread (FIG 44), and black tea. At about one-thirty, Brother returns from herding sheep. We rest after lunch and chat, or do what we like, for example, wash clothes, wash our hair, sit on the porch, and drink tea. If any sheep have died, Mother skins them and puts the skins on a wall inside the porch to dry. She also chops up dead lambs to feed the dogs.

Father herds the sheep all day, chanting, and chatting with other herdsmen. He does not come home for lunch,<sup>2</sup> because lambs will run to other flocks if they are unattended. Lambs might also sleep in a warm place and not follow their mothers or jump into water no matter how cold the weather is. Foxes are also a danger. Local Tibetans no longer wear fur, especially fox-skin hats and consequently, with fewer fox hunters, the fox population has increased.

At about four-thirty, Sister-in-law prepares *chas*. She mixes dried grass, chaff, and water on a big piece of plastic, in preparation for feeding the sheep (FIG 13). This requires about thirty minutes.

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<sup>1</sup>After it dries, this dung is put inside a walled enclosure about half a meter tall that is made of yak dung (FIG 9).

<sup>2</sup> In winter, Father, like many herders, does not eat or drink anything until returning home for supper.

Meanwhile, Mother pours water in a *'gu tse* (kettle or pitcher) from the copper bowls on the *mchod khri* in front of the *chos sgam* (scripture cabinet), goes outside, and pours the water on a hill behind the house to ensure that this sacred water is in a higher, unpolluted location. She returns to the house and puts the copper bowls on a porch shelf. Next, she makes dough, puts it into a big metal pot with the lid on, and covers it with embers. Thirty minutes later we have baked bread. Next, she takes some meat from the *lci sgam* 'yak dung freezer' (FIG 47) and leaves it to thaw near the stove so that it will be easy to chop later for meals. We rarely use our home freezer in winter, because meat kept in the yak dung freezer is tastier than that kept in the home freezer and the cold winter temperatures ensure it stays frozen.

Sister-in-law goes to the mountain and drives the yaks to the small river from which we fetch our household water. The yaks need water every day while the sheep just every second day. Sister-in-law then leaves the yaks at the river, returns to the fenced pasture on the mountain, and drives the sheep in this pasture back home. Sister-in-law and Mother then put *chas* into the troughs to feed these sheep.

Brother goes to help Father with the herding. They sort the sheep into three flocks. Brother herds one flock back home where Mother and Sister-in-law feed them. Meanwhile, Father stays with the other two flocks on the pasture. Brother then returns to the pasture and herds another flock home. By this time, Mother and Sister-in-law have finished feeding the first group of sheep and have put feed in the troughs for the second flock. Finally, Father brings home the third flock home, which is also fed. Feeding the sheep is difficult, because they bolt for the troughs as soon as they smell *chas*. At least three people are needed for this process, which takes about two hours in total.

After feeding the sheep, Brother goes to collect the yaks from the river and herds them back home. Mother yaks with calves are also fed. Brother and Sister-in-law tie the yaks to a *gdang* 'rope with a peg at each end' staked in the earth. Tied to each *gdang* are about ten *rtsa lo* 'short rope loops'. A *ske thig* 'rope put around yaks' necks' features a round piece of wood on one end of a yak hair rope. A *cha ri* 'short round piece of wood' is attached to the rope. The *cha ri* is fastened securely to the *gdang*.

Every winter in about the tenth lunar month when it is very cold, we put a *kheb* 'thick pad' on the mother yaks' backs at night to keep them warm, and remove it in the morning. The pads are made from old clothes that we no longer wear. Grandmother cuts our old clothes and sews them together so they form a thick pad. A rope is sewn to the pads. When the pad is put on the yaks, the rope is tied around the pad and tied at the top. Horses are treated the same way when it is very cold. *Kheb* are no longer used in the late second lunar month.

### Evening

Tired from herding his two flocks, which gives him little time to rest, Father rests by the stove once he is back home. Mother gives him *rtsam pa* and bread, pours tea in a bowl, and then offers *tsha gsur*. After putting embers on a square earth *tsha gsur* in front of our house, she puts *rtsam pa* and butter on top as an offering for *dri bza'* 'odor eaters.'<sup>1</sup>

Father turns on the TV and watches Tibetan language news, the weather report, and singing and dancing programs. Brother offers incense again as he did in the morning. Mother and Sister-in-law cook dinner, which is usually noodles and mutton. Sometimes we have boiled beef for dinner. We rarely have vegetables. We have dinner together at about nine PM. Sister-in-law scoops noodles into bowls and Father cuts and divides the meat among those present. After dinner, Mother feeds the dogs with the leftovers. Father sits on the *hu tse* and watches TV. Sometimes he watches Chinese-language TV programs. Mother does not like to watch TV because she says that she does not want to see people killing each other. Instead, she prefers to wipe the copper offering bowls with a clean towel while chanting. Sometimes she goes to Grandmother's home which is adjacent to ours, and chats. The rest of us sit around the stove and watch TV.

Around ten-thirty, four or five boys and young men between fifteen to twenty-seven years of age often come to my home (FIGS 3, 34, 35) to chat or watch TV. Father kindly welcomes them. They sit around the stove and talk about women, buying and selling sheep and yaks,

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<sup>1</sup> A class of deities on the plane of sensory desires that live on fragrances (<http://bit.ly/2HoVCec>, accessed 25 June 2014).



whose horse is fastest, cars and motorcycles, the weather, the condition of the grassland, marriage, and romantic relationships. Brother and I offer tea to our visitors.

Similarly, Brother often visits neighbors to chat with older boys and young men where they are not being supervised by old people. I often visit Grandmother and whoever is in her home.

Sister-in-law may visit Grandmother, watch TV with us, or go to bed early. Local young women generally do not leave their home in the evenings other than to visit nearby relatives.

Mother often goes to bed at about eleven PM, while the rest of us go to bed at about midnight. After adding more sheep pellets to the stove to make it easier to start a fire the next morning, Sister-in-law also goes to bed.

## SUMMER

In summer, the male heads of household gather, either informally while herding, or at a home to discuss the time to set off for the mountain pastures. The families are expected to take their yaks and sheep to the mountains to ensure that all the local families share the mountain pasture equally. Furthermore, all the livestock are expected to leave the winter pasture within a few days of each other to protect individual fenced pastures from being grazed by others' livestock.

Families stay on the mountains for about only forty-five days because, by this time, the grass has been heavily grazed by the approximately 450 yaks and 4,000 sheep that have been brought here.

The night before leaving our fixed home, Father, Brother, and I put pack frames on about five yaks that are veteran pack animals. Around seven-thirty the next morning, we load the pack yaks with clothes, a pot, a kettle, bedding, chopsticks, bowls, two or three thermoses, *rtsam pa*, wheat flour, bread, salt, tea, sugar, a small solar electricity generating panel that powers a small light in the tent and charges mobile phones, a milk bucket, a churn, ropes, a radio, about three mobile phones, a *ras gur* 'white cloth tent', *sha skam* 'dry yak meat', and so on. We also prepare a motorcycle that we ride to the base

of the mountain and park for safe-keeping in the home of a nearby family.

After the usual breakfast, we start off. Grandmother is sad to see us leave. Mother comes with us and helps pitch the cloth tent and makes the stove using various sized rectangular stones and mud. Two or three days later, she returns to the winter house and stays with Grandmother.

We camp on a mountain that has thick forests where people may easily become lost if they are unfamiliar with the local area. Around us are also big rocky mountains. Because it is easy to slide down the mountains on gravel deposits and suffer injuries, parents forbid their children from going there. About fifteen families live here in summer. There are no fences on the mountains.

We use *ras gur* 'cloth tents' on the mountain. There is no flat land; therefore, a tent base must be made by digging away soil to create a level area. We generally put our tent in the same place year after year. When viewed from a distance, the cloth tents resemble giant mushrooms.

The tent is narrow at the top and wide at the bottom and requires three poles. After pitching the tent, we cover it with a large piece of plastic to keep it drier when it rains. The plastic is fastened to the tent by throwing ropes over it, pulling them tight, and tying them to tent pegs. This prevents the plastic from blowing away. Stones are put around the tent to prevent wind from blowing inside.

In the past, *phying pa* 'felt cloth' (FIG 26) was used as a raincoat during rainy weather, but now commercially available plastic raincoats are used. I used a *phying pa* made by Grandmother when I was a child. It was warm and kept me dry.

The soil on the mountain is wet. To keep us dry, *spen ma* 'tamarisk' branches are collected, put on the earth, and covered with thick plastic over which cushions are scattered. This is the sitting and sleeping area.

Women usually make a stove with flat stones and mud. How well the stove is made is a topic of conversation among families, particularly among the women. Consequently, families boast that their stove is made well.

*Bsang khri* and *tsha gsur* are also made with stones, because it is easy to make a fire on the stones. The *bsang khri* is always in a higher position than the *tsha gsur*.

Since 2011 when Brother married, Father, Brother, and Sister-in-law have gone to the mountains. Before Brother's marriage, Mother also lived with them on the mountains and in Ston sa during summer.

In 2011, there were fifteen families camped on the mountain. They divided into four groups with three or four families per group. Each group put their tents in a circle. At night, the sheep were kept in the center of the circle, surrounded by the yaks. The calves were tethered to a wooden peg with a *be'u thig* tied around their front leg to prevent them from suckling their mothers. The *be'u thig* were swapped between the right and left legs on alternate nights to avoid injury to the calf. Generally, the mother yaks do not approach their tied calves. If they do, then they are tied to *rdang* away from their calves. *Lug lhas* refers to the circle of sheep, which are neither tied nor enclosed inside a fence. *Nor lhas* refers to the place where the yaks are kept. This arrangement protects the sheep from wolf attacks and also against thieves. In addition, each family usually brings a dog to protect the livestock and herders.

Thieves, generally Tibetans from neighboring villages, try to sneak into the area undetected when it is dark or foggy, herd the stolen sheep to the county town, and sell them to Muslim or Han butchers. Wolves, considered very clever, can also attack sheep at night during foggy weather, therefore, after dinner, men often go outside the tents and shout to frighten away both wolves and thieves.

### Morning

Sister-in-law gets up at about six AM, puts on her robe, washes her face, and brushes her teeth. To prepare the fire she uses the firewood piled by the stove, on top of which she puts *spen ma* 'dried plants' and yak dung. Using a cigarette lighter, she sets the dung on fire. After boiling water in a pot on the stove, Sister-in-law washes her hands again. Taking a wooden bucket, she goes to the *nor lhas* to milk. Some female yaks return from grazing and lie by their calves. These yaks are tied to the *gdang*. A yak's calf is untied and allowed to nurse for two or three

minutes, and then tied again. After the yak is milked, the calf is allowed to nurse for about ten minutes, and then tied again.

Brother gets up after Sister-in-law, dresses, washes his face, brushes his teeth, and then goes to collect the female yaks that did not return. They are usually near our tent. He uses an '*ur cha* (sling) to help herd them home, where he ties them to the *gdang*. He then offers *bsang* on the *bsang khri* behind the cloth tent on a large flat stone and offers *tsha gsur* on another stone in front of our cloth tent. The ritual is the same as in our winter home and on the autumn pasture (FIG 17).

Sister-in-law milks about fifteen female yaks in total. After all are milked, they are untied, and Brother herds them to nearby valleys. The location may vary depending on where the grass is more plentiful.

After the female yaks are driven away, Sister-in-law unties the calves and guides them to the nearby tents. The male yaks are allowed to graze freely.

Collecting yaks and milking is relatively easy on a sunny day but, if it is rainy or foggy, it may be difficult to locate the yaks. Summer is often rainy and the place where the yaks are tied is muddy. Sister-in-law must wear rubber boots when she milks. It is difficult to pull and tie the calves in the mud.

Father gets up last. He dresses, folds the quilts and cushions and puts them around the inside base of the cloth tent to keep out the wind. He then goes to the *lug lhas* and separates our sheep from other families' sheep. The sheep generally separate automatically when the herdsmen call, "'Ao ho! 'Ao ho! 'Ao ho!" If they do not, Father spends about an hour separating them. Meanwhile, Brother returns and helps Father count our sheep to make sure none are missing.

At about eight, we have a breakfast of bread, milk tea, and *ja kha*<sup>1</sup> or *rtsam pa*. We chat about where there is good grass and water for livestock. After breakfast, Father herds our sheep to the best grass. He takes his prayer beads and chants while herding.

Brother herds the yaks a bit further from home, and then goes to find the male yaks. We do not bring the male yaks back to our camp.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ja kha* is similar to *rtsam pa*. Roasted barley, dry cheese, and butter is put in a bowl. Hot tea is added and the ring finger is used to mix the ingredients, although some women use their index finger. The resulting mixture is drier than *rtsam pa*.

Instead, Brother takes them to a place where there is good grass and then collects them once every three or four days. Wolves do not attack male yaks, so we do not worry much about them. Brother also goes with other herdsmen to collect yaks.

Sister-in-law feeds our dog and then unties the calves and drives them to a place near our tent where she can watch them. Children often herd calves, but my family has no child who can watch the calves on the mountain. Sister-in-law must therefore watch them.

Next, Sister-in-law puts the yak dung together, pressing some against the earth with her shovel to make it as thin as possible. The surface side is dry one or two days later at which time Sister-in-law turns it over so that the other side will dry. A day later, she brings this *kho shog* 'pieces of dry yak dung' home. Next she goes to the *lug lhas* to collect sheep dung. She must do this early or other women will collect all of it.

A *khem* 'winnowing shovel' is used to winnow sheep dung. Only women do this work. It often rains on the mountain, sometimes for as many as ten consecutive days, so there are few chances to collect dry sheep dung. It is impossible to collect fuel if it rains. Consequently, we collect as much as we can on sunny days.

Sister-in-law returns to the kitchen to make butter. She warms the milk in a pot, pours it back into the churn, adds some *zho* (yogurt), and starts churning with the '*o khor* (churn handle). She also prepares lunch.

## Afternoon

We have lunch at about twelve-thirty, when Father and Brother return from herding. We have bread, *rtsam pa*, and sometimes, fried green peppers or, eggplants with meat, and milk tea.

After lunch, Father listens to the radio. Sometimes he naps. Young people Brother's age like to gather on a hill and play cards or chat. We do not have to stay with the livestock all day on the mountain. Sheep are herded to an area where there is good grass. When they are full, they are brought back near the tent where they can be easily watched. Consequently, because there are no fences, herding here is much easier than in the winter pasture, where the sheep must be

watched constantly in fear they will cross fences into another family's pasture.

Brother sometimes collects firewood after lunch. In the afternoon, Sister-in-law feeds our dog again, bakes bread and, about once every two days, churns milk. Butter forms after about three hours of intermittently churning and doing chores. Sister-in-law removes the butter, puts it into cold water in the milk bucket for about one to two hours, slaps it with her hands to remove excess water, and stores the butter in a basin.

Next, she boils *da ra* 'liquid in the churn after removing the butter' in a pot and pours it into a *chur sgye* 'cheesecloth' (FIG 27) hanging from a small pole set across two forked poles outside the tent. A basin catches *chur khu* 'whey' underneath the cheesecloth. The next morning, she removes the cheese and spreads it on a big piece of plastic and, on a sunny day, dries it. When it is not sunny, the cheese remains in the bag for drying later when sunny. Dried cheese is stored in coarse bags of either plastic or yak skin.

Sister-in-law also fetches water in the afternoon from a stream near our tents. We often have *ja lhag* 'tea extra', which is a meal of bread and milk tea at about five PM. Afterwards, Father herds the sheep back near our home. Meanwhile, Sister-in-law gathers the calves and ties them. At the same time, Brother herds the female yaks back home and ties them. Sister-in-law milks them in the same way as she did in the morning. Meanwhile, Brother offers *bsang* and *tsha gsur*. After Sister-in-law finishes milking, Brother herds the female yaks to graze in a valley and then returns to the tent.

## Evening

We use solar-powered light at night. Some families use candles. Sister-in-law prepares dinner, which is often noodles cooked in beef or noodle soup, and sometimes we also eat pieces of mutton with the noodles. Sister-in-law washes the bowls and pot after dinner and feeds our dog for the third time.

Later, Brother might visit other families and play cards. Father listens to the radio. We go to bed at about eleven.

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Butter and Salt

Father often visits Mother and Grandmother. He walks to our motorcycle carrying the butter and cheese in bags over his shoulder. If what he carries is too heavy, he loads the articles onto a horse, and rides it to the motorcycle. The times of his departure and return are flexible, and often depend on the weather. When he returns he brings mutton, dried beef, *rtsam pa*, bread, and vegetables.

Mother and Grandmother deal with the butter together. The butter to be stored is put in cold water and allowed to sit for about half an hour. The pieces of butter to be stored have different consistencies because they have been exposed to the air for different lengths of time.

Butter is commonly stored in clean, dried, sheep stomachs. Before butter is stored, the dried stomach is soaked in water for about half an hour. If butter of different consistencies is put into the sheep stomach in this condition, there will be empty places between the different chunks of butter. To prevent this, the butter is soaked again and pounded by hand on a flat stone, ensuring the butter is of equal consistency. Pounding the butter also removes excess water and ensures the butter will not spoil. Mother takes the pounded pieces of butter and uses her fist to press them inside the sheep stomach. When full, the stomach is sewn up and stored in Room Three.

We must herd livestock twice a month near a stream so our livestock can have salt from both the stream and from the mud near the stream. Typically, we start off at nine in the morning and start to return at about four. The stream runs across a shared grassland. The many fences in this area create narrow lanes through which the livestock must pass. This is difficult work because the livestock try to enter the fenced pasture in order to graze and must be constantly watched. When the livestock arrive, they lick the salty mud and drink salty water from the stream. They are allowed to stay for three or four hours. Although they also try to graze, the area is very overgrazed and unable to provide much forage.

Grandmother and Mother at the Winter House in Summer

Grandmother and Mother live in our winter house all year round, guarding it and our property. Thieves are common and may steal coral, silver ornaments, gold earrings, televisions, motorcycles, and so on from unattended homes.

### Morning

Mother gets up about seven-thirty, does about one hundred prostrations, fetches water and, upon returning, milks our three female goats. Then Grandmother gets up and prepares breakfast. She also offers *mchod pa*,<sup>1</sup> *bsang*, and *tsha gsur*. They have *rtsam pa*, bread, and milk tea for breakfast, and feed our cats with left-overs. After breakfast, Mother goes to the sheep-shed and covers the nannies' udders with a *nu kheb* (udder cover) that prevents the kids from nursing. The *nu kheb* has four strings - one at each corner - that are tied together on top of the goat's back. Then the goats are allowed to go outside.

Mother and Grandmother take *zor ba* (sickles, FIG 41) to cut vegetation that grows near our house and the sheep-shed. When dry, the cut plants are stored in the *rstwa khung* (grass room).

Once every three to five days, Mother climbs the mountain in the morning, examines our fence, and collects mushrooms. Sometimes livestock from neighbor villages on the mountain trespass on our fenced pastures, which is why Mother does this inspection.

### Afternoon

At about twelve-thirty we have a lunch of bread, black tea, and sometimes mushrooms fried with mutton. We do not often go outside at this time because it is hot. Instead, we stay inside and soften sheepskins and lambskins. After being soaked in *ldar*<sup>2</sup> for about ten

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<sup>1</sup> *Mchod pa*: an offering of water in copper bowls put in front of religious images.

<sup>2</sup> *Da ra*: liquid that remains after removing butter from a churn. The *da ra* is boiled until cheese forms. The cheese is removed. The remaining liquid is *chur khu*, which is put in a wooden bucket. Salt, a bit of chaff, and some *da*



days, the skins are removed, dried for three or four days in Room Three, returned to the *ldar* for a few hours, and then softened with *gnam shad*.<sup>1</sup> Skins are softened with *pags shad*<sup>2</sup> (FIG 42) about two days later. When very smooth, the skins are softened with both hands, and sometimes rubbed with a rough stone to further soften them.

Grandmother and Mother also make ropes, *rtsa lo*,<sup>3</sup> *ske thig*,<sup>4</sup> and *be'u thig*,<sup>5</sup> with both yak hair and sheep wool (FIG 53). They give them to Father to replace the old ropes. Grandmother also makes sheepskin robes (FIG 2), although the last one I remember making was in 2001.

If it is not hot outside in the afternoon, Mother and Grandmother collect dried plants and put them in the *rtswa khung* (grass house). In winter, we used to beat the stalked plants with a wooden stick and then fed them to sheep and yaks. Now, however, we use a machine to chop the plants. When it gets dark the goats come back. Mother ties them in the sheep-shed and milks them. Grandmother offers *bsang* and *tsha gsur*.

## Night

For dinner, Mother cooks noodles which she also feeds to our cats. After dinner, she washes the bowls and pot and makes bread that she gives to Father when he returns from herding on the mountain. Grandmother wipes the copper water-offering bowls with a clean cloth and then chants *ma Ni* while turning a hand prayer wheel (FIG 56). Mother prostrates and chants after making bread and then both go to bed at about eleven.

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*ra* are added. Skins are then put in a bucket of this mixture, which is now called *ldar*.

<sup>1</sup> *Gnam shad*: a tool for softening skins made of a forked tree branch with a metal blade between the forks.

<sup>2</sup> *Pags shad*: a wooden tool resembling a thin saw that is used to soften skins.

<sup>3</sup> *Rtsa lo*: a short rope tied to a *rdang*, which is a long rope that has a peg on each end. There are about ten *rtsa lo* tied to a *rdang*.

<sup>4</sup> *Ske thig*: a rope tied around a yak's neck and ~~the~~ short wooden stick sewed to it.

<sup>5</sup> *Be'u thig*: a short rope made of yak hair tied around a calf's foot and tied to a peg.

## STON SA

Around eight AM we pack and set out for Ston sa, arriving some ten hours later at about six. Mother brings us hot tea and bread from our winter home. She comes on foot. There is no time to make the stove that night as we must quickly pitch the cloth tent and move everything inside. We do not tie the yaks that night, because they are hungry and need to graze. Father grazes the sheep for some hours and then herds them back, otherwise they madly run here and there when they see fresh grass. We put mats on the earth, bring quilts, and go to bed soon after eating bread and tea for supper.

Each family has their own *mtsher sa* 'tent site' on the mountain and at Ston sa. If the stove from the year before is salvageable, it is repaired, and a new stove is not needed. We use the old stove if it has not destroyed by rain or children. However, if a new stove is necessary, the next morning, Mother and Sister-in-law make it from sod bricks they cut from the grassland with a shovel. They strengthen the stove with mud and then thrust *rdang* into the earth. Father makes a square, earthen incense altar behind the tent, and makes a square *tsha gsur* in front of the tent. Brother herds our livestock. Mother (FIG 18) and Sister-in-law milk the yaks. Mother returns to our winter home two or three days later.

A challenge in autumn is the lack of water. We typically water the yaks every day. At noon, we set out for a spring. Along the way, we must guide the yaks through narrow lanes between fenced pastures. After about an hour we reach the spring. We start back an hour later when the livestock have had enough water. This is an unpleasant daily experience because about ten families water their livestock at the same spring. Consequently, the spring is surrounded by livestock struggling to get to the head of the spring where the water is colder and cleaner. Although there is no generally agreed upon herding schedule among local families, sheep are typically watered in the morning and yaks in the afternoon. We water our sheep once every one or two days.

Life on the autumn pasture is, in many ways, easier than on the mountains. The grassland is level and so it is easy to walk around, and the many different colorful flowers that grow there make it beautiful. Delicious wild mushrooms are collected, cooked, and eaten, which

adds variety to our diet. Motorcycles and cars can be easily driven here. Young people often herd sheep and yaks with motorcycles. Fog does not often cover the grassland and there is less fear of wolf attacks.

There are some tent shops on the grassland that sell fruits, snacks, drinks, and clothes. Beautiful clothes are often worn because most of the community's young people congregate here, and there are many activities, for example, horse races and song competitions. In many other ways, however, daily life is almost the same as on the mountains.

We return to our winter home when the weather turns cold in late autumn and the grassland becomes yellow. Much of the grass is gone by this time and the pasture where our winter home is located is the only place where our livestock can access pasture with grass for winter. It is very important to count all the livestock and ensure that none are missing before we set off for our winter home. Everybody is up by around six AM and help pack after breakfast. The autumn pasture is near the winter home so my family members are very relaxed about this short journey. However, those whose winter home is far away get up earlier and often worry about the weather. If it is too hot both livestock and people will be thirsty and suffer from a long walk and if it rains, moving is also difficult.

Brother and Father start to pack around seven AM and finish around ten AM. Mother, Father, and Sister-in-law herd the yaks while Brother rides our motorcycle, herding the sheep to the winter home. This takes about three hours.

Life on the grassland is enjoyable in various ways, but there are also many challenges. I describe one of these challenges in the account below.

#### Account Four

It was in late autumn in 2013 when my family, as usual, moved back to our winter house. My family chose about twenty sheep and my uncle's family chose about 40 sheep to herd in our fenced pasture where there was plenty of grass. My family planned to sell them when they got fat so that we could earn more money. This is what most families do in my

village. At night, my family and Uncle's family put those sheep with other sheep in a big yard in front of our houses, which are very near each other.

One night, Father was not at home. The next morning, Brother and Uncle separated our sheep and counted them. Forty sheep were missing. Three people's tracks were at the gate of the yard. My family's relatives came and tracked the thieves, but all traces disappeared about one kilometer from my home. We did not know in which direction the thieves had taken our sheep.

Father then asked a monk for a divination. Father and Uncle drove Uncle bKra shis rgya mtsho's car to Khri ka County and Zi ling, looking for the sheep. They did not find them. Uncle Rdo rje thar and another man also went to Gcan tsha County Town looking for the sheep, but returned empty-handed.

Brother and some other young men made two groups and went to the main roads of Khri ka and Gcan tsha counties by car every night for about a week and quietly waited, hoping to meet the thieves with our sheep. They thought that the thieves might go to a county town to sell the sheep. The thieves never appeared.

We guessed that the thieves were very familiar with our family and knew that Father was not at home. Livestock were stolen from some other families that year, too. Villagers hesitantly wondering, "Maybe the thieves in our village and neighbor villages are cooperating. Otherwise how would thieves from other villages know which family has fat sheep that are easy to steal?"

When thieves steal livestock at night, they put them in a secluded place that night, and then load the livestock into a truck and take them to a county town the next night. Those stolen sheep were worth at least 23,000 RMB. After this theft, we took greater care of our livestock. Grandmother said:

I was really worried about this loss, but now I am not. We tried as hard as we could to find them, but we didn't find them. Maybe we owed some sheep to those thieves in our previous life. Now forget them. Stealing happens to most families sooner or later.

Locals often discuss change. Daily life today is quite different from the way it was during my childhood. Fifteen years ago, my family

had four horses. Today we have none. There were no bicycles, motorcycles, cars, TVs, and phones. People made clothes for themselves. Women spent significant time making yarn (FIGS 21, 22, 23) and various ropes while herding. Children played games together when they were herding calves for their families. All the family members chatted and chanted after dinner. Children also learned many folktales and riddles from their grandparents and would tell them to other children in the home to compete to see who could tell the most after dinner and when they went to bed.

Today, people have more money and buy motorcycles and cars. Since electricity came to my community in about 2007, locals have bought televisions, phones, refrigerators, and washing machines. Most children now attend school and never tell each other folktales. People spend less time interacting with each other at night. Instead, they watch TV, or are busy with their phones.

Daily life has been deeply impacted by all these new changes. Some locals have bought houses and live in the county town. Assignment of a certain amount of land limits the number of livestock a family can own and has created more conflict between families because of a sense of land ownership. In 2014, locals believe that there are neighboring areas where herders are paid salaries to herd for the government and no longer their own livestock - all in the name of protecting the environment. Locals worry that they will eventually have to move to busy, crowded towns.

TRANSITIONS: 2014-2017

Since writing about daily life in 2013, much has changed with enforcement of a resettlement policy, near universal education for children, and economic changes in Gcan tsha thang. From 2014-2017, I was away at university and only able to visit my home during summer and winter holidays. I often asked my parents and friends about local news. They offered brief descriptions but were unable to explain why change was happening. Father mentioned that construction was ongoing and that all the families in Ma Ni thang<sup>1</sup> would receive 10,000

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<sup>1</sup> Ma Ni thang is the cultural and economic center of Gcan tsha thang Township. Stores, the township school, and clinic are located here. It is also

RMB from the government because they would have to resettle. He said, "I have heard that Ma Ni thang is becoming a city."

I was on school holiday in the summer of 2017 so visited Gcan tsha thang. There was no public transportation from the county town to my community. Father met me in the county town to take me home. He drove a small car, one of the cheapest for sale in China. As we passed though Ma Ni thang where I attended primary school, many blurry childhood memories came to me. The old primary school rooms had been demolished and replaced with a new five-floor building. The local main road was under construction. All the local stores and neighbors around the school (FIG 33) in Ma Ni thang were gone (FIG 62). Father pointed to some white tents in Ma Ni thang and reported that some families had resettled there (FIG 63).

A petrol station had been built in Ma Ni thang, which was dusty from passing trucks and machines involved in construction work. Most construction workers were Chinese, although a few were locals. Father said that the men earned one hundred RMB a day, while the women were paid eighty RMB.

I was very surprised to see several thousand square meters of pastureland covered with solar panels (FIGS 60 and 61). Father said that about fifteen households had sold their pastureland to a company that planned to sell electricity to the government. Many stories about this solar panel projects were circulating when I got home. Grandmother was upset. She said:

Do those families not know what they are doing? You don't sell your homeland for money. I don't know how much money those families are receiving, however, it doesn't matter now, because the money will only last for a few years. What matters is the other people in the community and future generations of this community. This land is passed down from generation to generation and we cannot sell it to others for some money.

Father interrupted:

Who knows what will happen to this land? It is very much up to the government. When the government wants the land, they probably won't pay you if they don't want to. Maybe it's a better idea to sell it for a high price when you can.

Concern over selling land, resettlement, and ongoing construction in Ma Ni thang are major concerns for locals. I learned that 500 households who were receiving *dibao* 'basic living allowance'<sup>1</sup> would be provided new houses in Ma Ni thang and then would be required to move there once the houses were complete.

When I asked about what was happening in Ma Ni thang, I heard the following comments, expressed with uncertainty: "Ma Ni thang is going to become a city." "A railroad from Zi ling through Rma lho will pass through the center of Gcan tsha thang."

Mother no longer goes to the mountains in the summer. Instead, she stays at the winter home with Grandmother and cares for her grandsons. This was my first time (2017) seeing my brother's second son. My parents are eager to send their two grandchildren to kindergarten, suggesting that their understanding of the value of education has changed as compared to the time when I was a child. I ran away from home twice in order to go to school because my parents were convinced I should stay at home, herd livestock, and not attend school.

Father told me that he planned to sell half of our family's livestock because the grassland in Gcan tsha thang is now fenced and grassland degradation is severe, which makes it difficult to herd livestock as a livelihood.

Father bought an apartment in the county town where my parents plan to move and care for their grandsons while they attend school there. This will leave only Brother and Sister-in-law in Gcan tsha thang. This arrangement typifies many Gcan tsha thang families with the grandparents moving to the county town to send their

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<sup>1</sup> This Chinese term refers to financial aid in the amount of about 50,000 RMB annually from the government to families that are considered poor.

grandchildren to school, because the local primary school is noted for its poor quality (Sangs rgyas bkra shis 2017). My parents were not sure about what they would do once they moved to the county town besides making sure their grandsons attended school.



FIG 1. In front of my family's winter home. The mountains to the left in the distance are where yaks and sheep are herded in summer.



FIG 2. I wear Grandfather's (1942-1992) sheepskin robe that Grandmother made (Gur mgon skyabs 2014).



<sup>1</sup> All photos taken by Sangs rgyas bkra shis in 2014 unless otherwise stated.

FIG 3. My home and nearby landscape in summer.



FIG 4. Camping and herding on the mountains in summer (Rin chen rgyal 2013).



FIG 5. *Ya ru* 'two-year-old yaks' and their mothers (Rin chen rgyal 2013).



FIG 6. Right to left: Klu mo tshe ring, Gcod pa don 'grub, Rin chen rgyal, Ban de rgyal, Pa lo skyid (kneeling), G.yang 'dzoms lha mo (b. 2009), and Rdo rje skyid.





FIG 7. Scripture cabinet in my home.



FIG 8. Yak dung is collected, dried, and stacked here, about fifty meters behind our home.



FIG 9. Sheep dung is winnowed to remove the fine, dry powder which, when burned, only smolders, giving off much smoke. The dust from the winnowing collects (foreground) and is put in bags (background). Later, Chinese friends from Khri ka come, take the bags back home in trucks, and use the pellet powder for fertilizer. This gift of fertilizer is part of a mutually beneficial relationship between our family and these Chinese families. Rdo rje skyid uses a thin board to fill bags with sheep dung.



FIG 10. Mother, Sister-in-law, and two neighbors fetch water at about six-thirty AM.



FIG 11. Gser chen Lab rtse (Rin chen rgyal 2013).



FIG 12. My family's sheep being driven to the shared, fenced pasture.





FIG 13. Feeding *chas* to sheep near our winter home.



FIG 14. Incense altar in Ston sa.



FIG 15. Father and Mother unpacking a yak on the autumn pasture.



FIG 16. My family on the autumn pasture.



FIG 17. Autumn pasture.





FIG 18. Mother milking one of our yaks on the autumn pasture.



FIG 19. Father, putting up fencing on the autumn pasture.



FIGS 20, 21, and 22. (L) *Ka mo* 'bags' woven by Grandmother using a '*thag*' loom'. Historically they were used primarily to store tea. Now, nobody makes them in my family. Instead, we use plastic bags and metal containers to store tea. Bags, blankets, tent sections, and mats were woven in the past, however, Grandmother and Mother, who can both weave well, no longer do so because it is easy and convenient to purchase these articles or their substitutes (Sangs rgyas bkra shis 2014). (C) Balls of yarn from yak hair spun by Mother and Grandmother (2014, Sangs rgyas bkra shis). (R) *Gru gu* 'ball of yarn' from sheep wool spun by Mother and Grandmother.



FIGS 23 and 24. (L) '*Phang*' for spinning wool and yak hair into yarn used by Mother and Grandmother. They rarely use it today. (R) An incense bag hangs from a pole in Room One.



FIGS 25 and 26. (L) Mother and Grandmother weave *sgye* 'woven bags' that are used to store dung, dried chopped grass, and barley grain. (R) *Phying pa* made by Grandmother.



FIGS 27 and 28. (L) A *chur sgye* 'cheesecloth' often hangs from a pole that now has a drying sweater. (R) *Sgyo* 'yak skin bags' containing wheat flour.





FIG 29. A *khem* 'winnowing shovel' is used to winnow sheep dung. Only women do this work.



FIGS 30 and 31. (L) *Sle bo*, used to carry dung for fuel to our home. (R) Ash pile near my home.



FIG 32. Yak dung piled and drying near my home.



FIG 33. Re bltos bca' sdod (Fuheji xiao) School in Ma Ni thang.



FIG 34. My home is to the right of this photo. The mountains in the distance are where we herd in summer.





FIG 35. My home and nearby landscape in summer (2014, Rin chen rgyal).



FIG 36. Sheep are driven to the shared fenced pasture.



FIG 37. My family's sheep-shed.



FIG 38. Driving our family's yaks to our fenced pasture on the mountain in winter.



FIGS 39 and 40. Lambskins dry in the corridor of our home. A *sdud ma* 'broom' is used to sweep sheep dung.



FIGS 41 and 42. (L) Sickle used to cut plants that are dried, cut up, and later fed to sheep. (R) *Pags shad* used to soften skins.





FIGS 43 and 44. (R) Churn used by Mother, Sister-in-law, and Grandmother. (L) *Go re* (bread made mainly from flour and water) and *go re gcus ru ma* (bread made from flour, water, and turmeric). Mother baked this bread.



FIGS 45 and 46. (L) Cooking area in Room One. (R) My family often eats meals together while sitting near the *go kha*.



FIGS 47 and 48. (L) Yak dung freezer. (R) Glasses and bowls are kept on cabinet shelves. Chopsticks, knives, and spoons are in the drawers.



FIG 49. Room Three features a freezer, wall cupboards, a television, and a washing machine.



FIGS 50 and 51. (L) Scripture cabinet in my home. (R) The *hu tse* in Room Three. The scripture cabinet is to the left.

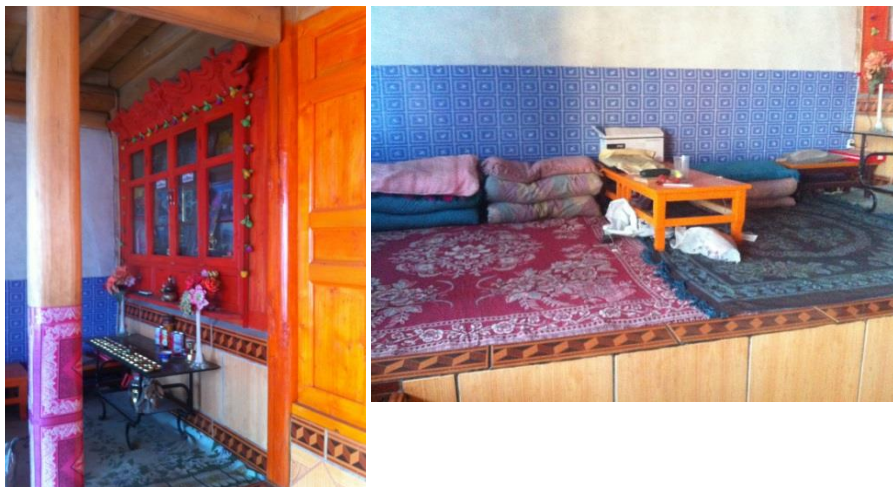


FIG 52. My winter home's glass enclosed porch.





FIG 53. Grandmother, Rdo rje skyid, and G.yang 'dzoms lha mo beat wool in their sheep enclosure to make the wool less matted.<sup>1</sup>



FIGS 54 and 55. (L) Milk bucket. (R) Hand mill in our home for grinding roasted barley grain into *rtsam pa*.



<sup>1</sup> The wool is beaten to remove dirt and sheep feces. The wool is first beaten where the ground is hard and then the wool is pulled apart by hand and shaken and beaten again. This is done several times. Finally, the wool is put on a big piece of sheepskin leather and beaten until it is very clean.

FIGS 56 and 57. (L) Grandmother's prayer wheel. (R) *Shugs mo* is a plant that grows near the river in the shared, fenced pasture. When harvested, the plant is broken off by hand. My family only uses it to make brooms.



FIGS 58 and 59. (L) A *dar lcog* 'prayer flags on a pole' stands to the right of the incense burning platform near my home. (R) Mother often suggests I go to Gser chen Lab rtse before I leave home (2014, Ban 'de rgyal).





FIGS 60 and 61. In 2017, I was very surprised see several thousand square meters of pastureland near Ma Ni thang covered with solar panels. About fifteen households had sold their pastureland to a company that planned to sell electricity to the government. A number of the local workers were Tibetan women (in yellow).



FIGS 62 and 63. The local main road was under construction in Ma Ni thang and all the local stores and neighbors were gone. Father pointed to some white tents and reported that some families had resettled there.



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## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

'gu tse འགྲུ་ཙེ།  
 'o 'khor འོ་ཁོར།  
 'o zo འོ་ཙོ།  
 'phang འཕང་།  
 'thag འཐག, 'thag khri འཐག་ཁྲི།  
 'ur cha འུར་ཇ།  
 ban de rgyal བན་དེ་རྒྱལ།  
 bar chad lam sel བར་ཆད་ལམ་སེལ།  
 bde chen བདེ་ཆེན།  
 bde chen dgon pa བདེ་ཆེན་དགོན་པ།  
 be'u thig བེའུ་ཐིག  
 bkra shis rgya mtsho བརྒྱ་ཤིས་རྒྱ་མཚོ།  
 bla ma བླ་མ།  
 blo brtan rdo rje བློ་བརྟན་རྡོ་རྗེ།  
 bsang khem བསང་ཁེམ།  
 bsang khri བསང་ཁྲི།  
 bsang khug བསང་ཁུག།  
 bzang spyod smon lam བཟང་སྟོད་སྟོན་ལམ།  
 bzhi ba'i smyung gnas བཞི་བའི་སྟུང་གནས།  
 bzho ze'u བཞོ་ཟེའུ།  
 cha ri ཇ་རི།  
 chas ཇས།  
 chos sgam ཇོས་སྒྲམ།  
 chur ba ཇུར་བ།  
 chur khu ཇུར་ཁུ།  
 chur sgye ཇུར་སྟེ།  
 da ra ད་ར།  
 dar lcog དར་ལྷོག།  
 dga' ldan bshd sgrub dar rgyas gling དག་འ་ལྷན་བཤད་སྦྱབ་དར་རྒྱས་གླིང་།  
 dge 'dun shes rab དགེ་འདུན་ཤེས་རབ།  
 dge lugs དགེ་ལུགས།  
 dgon bdag དགོན་བདག།  
 dgun sa དགུན་ས།  
 dibao 低保  
 dkon mckog rgyal དགོན་མཚོག་རྒྱལ།

dpal ldan དཔལ་ལྷན།

dpal ldan bkra shis དཔལ་ལྷན་བརྟ་ཤེས།

dri bza' འི་བཟལ།

dung phor འུང་ཕོར།

g.yang 'dzoms lha mo གཡང་འཛོམས་ལྷ་མོ།

g.yon ru གཡོན་རུ།

Gajiaer 尕加二

gajiayi 尕加一

Gangmao 刚毛

gangs ljongs shes rig nor bu'i gling གངས་ལྷོངས་ཤེས་རིག་ནོར་བུའི་གླིང།

gcan tsha གཅན་ཅ།

gcan tsha rdzong གཅན་ཅ་རྫོང།

gcan tsha thang གཅན་ཅ་ཐང།

gcod pa don 'grub གཅོད་པ་དོན་འགྲུབ།

gdang གདང།

gle gzhug གླེ་གཞུག

gnam shad གནམ་ཤ།

go kha གོ་ཁ།

go khung གོ་ཁུང།

go re གོ་རེ།

go re gcus ru ma གོ་རེ་གཅུས་རུ་མ།

gru gu གུ་གུ།

gser 'od གསེར་འོད།

gser chen གསེར་ཆེན།

gser mtsho skyid གསེར་མཚོ་སྐྱིད།

gshong mo che གཤུང་མོ་ཆེ།

gur mgon skyabs གུར་མགོན་སྐྱབས།

gzungs bsdus གཟུངས་བསྐྱུས།

Han 汉

hu tse ཁུ་ཙེ།

Huangnan 黄南

ja kha ཇ་ཁ།

ja lhag ཇ་ལག

Jianzha 尖扎

Jianzhatan 尖扎滩

jo bo rin po che ཇོ་བོ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།

jo khang ཇོ་ཁང།

ka mo ཀ་མོ།  
 ka rgya dang bo ཀ་རྒྱ་དང་བོ།  
 ka rgya gnyis pa ཀ་རྒྱ་གཉིས་པ།  
 kheb ཁེབ།  
 khem ཁེམ།  
 kho shog ཁོ་ཤོག།  
 khri ka ཁྲི་ཀ།  
 klu mo tshe ring ལུ་མོ་ཚེ་རིང་།  
 lab rtse ལའ་རཙེ།  
 lag skor ལག་སྐོར། (mchig མཆིག)  
 lci ba ལྷི་བ།  
 lci sgam ལྷི་སྐམ།  
 ldar ལྟར།  
 lha sa ལྷ་ས།  
 lho ba ལྷོ་བ།  
 lo ba ལོ་བ།  
 lo sar ལོ་སར།  
 ltung bshags ལུང་བཤགས།  
 lug lhas ལུག་ལྷ་ས།  
 Luowa ལཱ་ལྱ།  
 ma Ni མ་ཏི།  
 ma Ni thang མ་ཏི་ཐང།  
 mar མར།  
 mar khu thang མར་ཁུ་ཐང།  
 mchod khri མཚོད་ཁྲི།  
 mchod me མཚོད་མེ།  
 mchod pa མཚོད་པ།  
 me lcags མེ་ལྷགས།  
 mgo log མགོ་ལོག།  
 mkhyen rab rgya mtsho མཁྱེན་རབ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།  
 mtsher sa མཚེར་ས།  
 mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྟོན།  
 ngang rong lnga ba 'jam dbyangs mkhyen rab rgya mtsho ངང་རོང་ལྷ་བ་  
                     འཇམ་དབྱངས་མཁྱེན་རབ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།  
 nor lhas རྟོར་ལྷ་ས།  
 nu kheb རུ་ཁེབ།  
 nub phyogs su skyod pa'i sgrug རུ་བུ་གས་སུ་སྟོད་པའི་སྐྱུང།

o rgyan 'phrin las rdo rje ཨོ་རྒྱལ་འཕྲིན་ལས་རོ་རྩེ།

o'u rong ཨོ་ལུ་རོང་།

ong ba ཨོང་བ།

pa lo skyid པ་ལོ་སྐལ་ལྷོ།

pags shad པགས་ཤ།

paṇ chen rin po che པན་ཆེན་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།

phying pa ཕྱིང་པ།

Qinghai 青海

ras gur རས་གུར།

rdo rje skyid རོ་རྩེ་སྐལ་ལྷོ།

rdo rje thar རོ་རྩེ་ཐར།

ril ma རིལ་མ།

rin chen rgyal རིན་ཆེན་རྒྱལ།

rje rin po che རྩེ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།

rkang mo རྒང་མོ།

rma lho རྩ་ལྷོ།

rtsa lo རྩ་ལོ།

rtsag pa རྩག་པ།

rtsam pa རྩམ་པ།

rtswa khung རྩ་ཁུང་།

ru skor རུ་སྐོར།

rung ja རུང་ཇ།

rwa rgya རུ་རྒྱ།

sa dkar ས་དཀར།

Sangjiezhaxi 桑杰扎西

sangs rgyas bkar shis སངས་རྒྱས་བཀར་ཤིས།

sangs rgyas chos lugs སངས་རྒྱས་ཆོས་ལུགས།

sdud ma སུད་མ། (rtswa phyags རྩ་ཕྱགས།; phyags ma ཕྱགས་མ།)

sga སྐ།

sgar chag སྐར་ཆག

sgrol ma སྐྱོལ་མ།

sgye སྐལ་ལྷོ།

sgyo སྐལ་ལྷོ།

sha 'thag སཏ་འཐག

sha skam སཏ་སྐམ།

Shaanxi 陕西

Shinaihai 石乃亥

shugs mo ལྷགས་མོ།  
skal bzang rdo rje ལྷལ་བཟང་རྡོ་རྗེ།

ske thig སྐེ་ཐིག  
skyabs 'gro སྐལ་བས་འགྲོ།

sle bo སྤེ་བོ།  
smon lam སྐོན་ལམ།  
snying lcags rgyal སྤྱིང་ལྷགས་རྒྱལ།

spen ma སྤེན་མ།  
sprel nag སྤྲེལ་ནག  
spyang tshang སྤྱང་ཚང།

ston sa སྟོན་ས།  
Sun Wukong 孙悟空

Tang San, Tangseng bla ma 唐僧 藍་མ།

thab ka ཐབ་ཀ།  
thab khung ཐབ་ཁུང།

thang ka ཐང་ཀ།  
thor thug ཐོར་ཐུག

ting 'phags bskal gsum ཐིང་འཕགས་བསྐལ་གསུམ།  
tsha gsur ཐཤ་གསུར།

tsho ba ཐོ་བ།

Xi'an International Studies University, Xi'an waiguoyu daxue 西安外  
国语大学

Xi'an 西安

Xiayangzhi 辖羊直

Xinjiang 新疆

Xiyouji 西游记

ya ru ཡ་རུ།

zho ཞོ།

zhwa dmar paN+Ti ta dge 'dun bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho ཞྭ་དམར་པཎྜི་ཏ་དགེ་  
འདུན་བསྐྱེད་འཛིན་རྒྱལ་མཚོ།

zi ling ཟི་ལིང།